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President's Column

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President's Column

Happy New Year – and Happy New Decade!

It is with anticipation I look forward to working with the SELA Executive Committee and SELA Board in 2020. The various sections, round tables, and committees are engaging in some important and interesting projects, some begun in 2019 and others starting this year. If you are serving on one of these units, I hope you will give support to any calls for participation by the unit leader since it is only by the active participation and involvement of its membership that SELA will continue to succeed and to grow. Although the year is just beginning, it is also time to start thinking of the next biennium: we will need nominees for office and those of you who are not yet serving on a section, round table, or committee are encouraged to indicate your interest in doing so via the options listed on the membership form when you renew your membership.

Perhaps the most notable thing to keep in mind is that this is the year SELA celebrates its centennial anniversary! Nineteen twenty was the year when women (finally) got the right to vote, when Prohibition became the law of the land, and when Henry Ford's Model T continued its successful run as America's best-selling automobile. It was the year when the record industry belatedly discovered there was a large African American market for phonograph records when Mamie Smith's recording of "Crazy Blues" on the Okeh label unexpectedly sold a million copies within six months of its release. In 1920 famed Italian opera tenor Enrico Caruso was still performing and recording (sadly, he died of an illness at age 48 in 1921). The Census Bureau for the first time recorded more Americans living in cities and large towns than in rural areas. The world of 1920 was quite different from our world of 2020 but libraries and librarians were and still are on the scene.

In June 1920 several southeastern librarians traveling to the American Library Association conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado discussed the idea of setting up a regional meeting. About a hundred librarians from seven southeastern states ended up attending such a meeting, labeled the Southeastern Librarians' Conference, on November 12-13, 1920 in Signal Mountain, Tennessee. This was the beginning of what formally became the Southeastern Library Association when nine southeastern states ratified the new association's constitution in 1924.¹

We will be making plans to celebrate SELA's Centennial this coming Fall. I hope you will be able to attend.

Tim Dodge
Auburn University

¹ Ellis Eugene Tucker, ed., *The Southeastern Library Association: Its History and its Honorary members 1920 – 1980* (Tucker, Ga.: The Southeastern Library Association, 1980), 1-2.